

SOME ODD STORIES.

INTERESTING TALES OF ADVENTURE
ON SEA AND LAND.The Blood Diamond of Brazil—An Old
Miner's Story of the Fatal Stone and How
It Caused Two Deaths—Sunk to Rise No
More.

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"Do you know there are such things as fatal diamonds and to possess one means certain and violent death?" asked the old diamond miner. "It is true," he went on, noting my look of incredulity. "I saw one of the stones in Australia and my partner found one of the accused things in Brazil. They are called blood diamonds, and the name is well applied. No matter which way you turn one, in some corner or angle of it lurks a crimson spot that seems like a drop of blood. Before the Australian stone was lost it had been in the possession of nine different persons, and every one of them died a violent death."

"My partner in Brazil was a likely young fellow named John Robinson. He was born in Michigan and had taken to wandering over the world at an early age. It was his ambition to make a fortune, return to Michigan, and support his parents in luxury as long as they lived. Night after night, as we smoked our pipes, he talked of this one great desire that possessed him. Poor fellow! All his chances were blasted the moment he touched that fatal diamond."

"I never knew exactly how it came into his possession. There was some mystery about that, and I did not explain. I am certain he did not steal it from the mine, for it was partially polished, bringing out strongly the bloody light in the stone. It seemed to me that the one who set out to polish it had not lived to finish his task. I noticed John's excitement some time before he showed me the stone, and I wondered what could all this be. He was smoking in front of our cabin door when he came and crouched close beside me, his voice trembling as he whispered:

"I'm going back home tomorrow, Hank!"

"You mean you are going to start," I corrected. "Have you given up making your fortune?"

"Not a bit of it, man! I have my fortune in my pocket!"

"What?"

"Here," he softly cried, excitedly fumbling in his clothes and producing something. "Take a look at this!"

"Then he held the diamond up before my eyes, causing me to drop my pipe and utter a cry of amazement. The stone was as large as an egg, and once glance showed me it was of the very highest grade."

"Where in the name of heaven did you get that?" I asked.

"I found it," was his evasive reply.

"What's it worth, Hank?"

"It's worth a king's ransom," I declared as I reached out to take it from his fingers. Then I saw the drop of blood lurking in an angle of the fatal stone, and I fell back feeling my face grow pale. "My soul," I gasped; "it's the blood diamond!"

"What's that?" he questioned, but when I had told him he laughed at me, saying he was not superstitious. All the same, I refused to touch the thing and urged him to throw it away. He actually thought me crazy.

"While we were examining the stone I glanced up and discovered a pair of dark, glittering eyes fastened upon us. The eyes quickly disappeared around the corner of the hut, but not until I had recognized the evil face of Matanza, a native laborer."

"That night I rested poorly, but in some manner Robinson managed to slip out of the cabin without arousing me. When morning came, I discovered he was gone. I know not what fate possessed him to sneak away in such a manner, but I think it was the evil influence of the diamond."

"It was near midday when he was found, less than half a mile away. He was stone dead, his skull having been crushed like an eggshell by means of a heavy stone. The accused diamond was gone, for its bloody work was done."

"In a moment I suspected Matanza, and inquiry revealed the fact that he had not been seen that day. A search failed to find a trace of him and then I told what I thought had happened. In less than an hour an armed party was ready to start on the trail, which was to be followed by bloodhounds, the animals being kept to hunt down runaway thieves."

"It was near sundown when we came up with him. He had fallen and sprained his ankle, so he could not travel very fast, and there was no chance of his escaping. When he saw he was fairly cornered, he turned to shake his clenched hands at us, and then began hobbling down a cut that led to a dark sink hole that was like a basin filled with black water, on the surface of which nothing floated."

"Thinking I might try to give us the slip by climbing upon some rocks to the right, I hastily scrambled over the boulders to intercept him. When I reached the summit, I could look down upon him as he stood at the verge of the sink hole, trapped. He had the fatal diamond in his hand, and he was wildly cursing the stone in his own language."

"You have brought me death, as I gave death to the American!" he cried. "You shall bring death to no more! Let me who can draw you from beneath the black water!"

"Then one of the dogs broke from leash and came baying at the fugitive. Matanza turned to face the creature, and with one leap the hound fastened its teeth in the native's throat. Over and over whirled man and brute as they shot downward. I saw an instant gleam of the blood diamond just as they struck, and then the black water closed sluggishly over them. We waited 36 minutes, but neither dog nor man rose to the surface. The fatal diamond was lost forever."

With His Own Weapon.

I was with the Northern Pacific railroad survey when it made its way up the Yellowstone valley. Dave Stone, a young engineer of our party, had made a bitter enemy of Roper Jack, one of the scouts and Indian fighters, and as Jack had an ugly record it was expected that trouble would follow. Stone was a fearless fellow, and one of the best shots I ever saw, therefore he did not seem to care in the least for the threats and black looks of the scout. More than once I warned him to look out for the Roper, but he only laughed at me, saying he was able to take care of himself.

As I anticipated, the affair finally culminated. Hot words passed between the two, and then Jack declared the engineer was a coward. I was standing where I could look Stone square in the face as these words were uttered, and I saw him turn very white through the coat of tan on his countenance, while his jaws hardened and his dark eyes glittered.

"You are a liar!" he retorted icily. "And to prove it I'll fight you and put a bullet through you!"

"Not much you won't!" cried the scout. "I don't know much about duels, but I do know I'm the one challenged, and I reckon that gives me the right of choosing weapons. We won't fight with guns, but we'll use the rope."

"Yep. You git on your horse, an' I'll git on mine. We'll both have a lasso an' be stationed 30 rods apart. At a signal we'll ride at each other, both with the idea of ropin' t'other critter from his horse. The lucky man has the right to tow t'other galoot as far as he dern pleases."

That meant the man who was lassoed would be dragged over the plain until he was dead, a mass of broken bones and bleeding flesh was the end of the lariat.

Dave Stone hesitated for an instant, and then he slowly said:

"I never threw a rope in my life."

"That ain't nothin' to me," declared Jack. "Fight or take water."

"Under the circumstances," spoke the engineer, "I presume you will give me a week in which to practice with a lasso, so I may have some show in the game."

This did not suit the Roper at all, but every one in the party declared it was no more than fair, and knowing no man could perfect himself in the use of the lasso in such a brief time Jack finally agreed.

Stone procured a lariat, and from that time on he was busy practicing with it every spare moment he could obtain. But he had little time for practice, and he did not make rapid progress, for all of which he was perfectly cool and determined to meet the Roper on the day set for the arranged duel.

The day before the duel was to come off, we received orders to make camp early in the afternoon. While the laborers were looking after this matter Roper Jack threw himself down on the grass and calmly went to sleep. It was thus we found him, lying flat on his back, with a big rattlesnake coiled on his broad breast. Our cries of alarm awoke him, and he saw the snake. His eyes filled with horror, but he dared not stir, for the serpent seemed angry, and the scout knew it would strike at the first motion.

Dave Stone carried his lasso at his waist. In a moment he had released it, and then the noose circled round his head. Before he realized what he contemplated doing he made the cast. Through the air shot the noose, dropping fairly over the uplifted head of the rattler, and the next instant the snake was jerked squirming through the air. In a remarkably brief space of time the serpent's head was crushed beneath Stone's boot heel, and the engineer was calmly coiling his lasso. Every witness stood astounded.

Roper Jack had leaped to his feet, and he looked at Stone with an expression of amazement and admiration growing on his weatherbeaten face. At length he came slowly forward.

"I swear, that was a slick throw!" he said. "I reckon you saved my life, pard, an' right hyar I ask your pardon for callin' ye a coward. You ain't none whatever. A man as can handle a rope like that can't be a coward! If you insist on fightin', we'll have it out, just as we agreed, but I tow I ain't anxious to fight a man as has saved me from a rattler's jaws."

This was a fair apology, and Stone accepted it.

"We'll call it square, then," declared the young engineer.

"Let's shake," invited the scout, extending his hand.

They shook.

He Lost Something.

Last year I attended a horse race in the state of Maine. As a result of the free for all, Lightfoot was an easy winner, Penobscot coming in second, with Gif Thar pressing him hard. A way back on the track beyond the quarter post the skinniest old nag I ever set eyes on was making a desperate stagger to get around to the judges' stand before dark. The old horse was called Disaster, and her appearance on the track had occasioned any amount of ridicule.

I noticed a tall, lanky country lad who came down past where I stood, looking all around on the ground, a sad and disgusted expression on his homely face.

"Looking for anything?" I asked.

"Yep," he nodded.

"Lost something?"

He stopped, put his hands deep into the pockets of his patched pantaloons, lopped his long neck to the right and cocked his left shoulder about three inches higher than the other.

"Mister," said he, "mebbe you know some show feller what is lookin' for a freak. Ef you do, by gum! I kin show him the blindest gam'd dern fool in seven counties! I've bin workin' all summer at odd jobs to get enough to buy me a spankin' suit of new store clothes, an' I managed to lay by \$13. To-day dat he said I ought come to town an' git my rig. I kem down with the hull pile of that money right slap in my britches pocket—walked all the way an' stopped seven times to get a nip of cider 'long the road. When I got inter town I was a leetle twisted, an' so I brought up here. See that gosh-blamed old crow bait of a hoss back thar? Waul, when I saw her, I 'membered how in a story I read once jest that kind of hoss fooled 'em all an' got away with the tin. I loved Disaster'd do that same thing, an' I saw my chance to make a heap of money, so—"

"You don't mean to say you placed your money on that horse?"

"Ef'ry horsevogged cent, by gum! Lost anything! I guess I have! I've got ter wear these clothes another year, an' Jed Bridger'll have a new rig sure. He's sartin to cut me out with Mandy Brooks! Am I lookin' for anything? Waul, I'm lookin' for a big hand club. I'm goin' out there behind the fence an' thump my head a few times jest to see ef it sounds hollow!"

Then he slouched away, his hands still deep in the pockets of his shabby pantaloons, and his eyes on the ground, the very picture of despair.

WILLIAM G. PATTEN.

Not to Be Misconstrued.

The sound of the old man flagellating a carpet in the back yard nerved the youth in the front parlor to seek to make himself understood.

"Do you?"

With every symptom of anxiety he leaned toward the girl of his choice.

"Look with favor upon my suit!"

A smile disturbed the delicate curves of her lips.

"Yes," she answered, and his being thrilled with the glad tidings, "I do. I may seem to be looking at the northwest corner of the room immediately above your head, but that is owing to the congenital strabismus which afflicts me. You will accept this explanation, I trust. Thank you."

In the falling light he printed a kiss upon her brow, and their troth was plighted.—Detroit Tribune.

Very Particular.

Lady—Are your antiques all genuine?

Clerk—Yes, madam, and we so guarantee them.

Lady—Well, all our furniture is antique, and I wish to get a genuine antique Louis XIV carpet sweeper.—New York Weekly.

Why He Smoked.

"What makes you cling to cigarettes?"

"I'm absentminded," Cholly replied.

"What has that to do with it?"

"My cigahwette reminds me when it's time to breathe."—Washington Star.

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Also, received ex Australia, 2600 asst'd Elect. Lamps, Hose, Butcher Knives, Carvers, Carriage Gloss Paint, Sulphur Bellows, Scissors, Shoe, Paint and Varnish Brushes; Buckles, Picture Cord, Furniture Nails, Tape Measures, Jennings Bits, Yale Padlocks, Oilers, galv'd Swivels, White Shellac, Gold Leaf, Leather Washers, and at last our fine asmt. of Wostenholm Pocket Knives and Razors has got here.

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